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## REVIEWS

ENGLISH LITERATURE DURING THE LIFETIME OF SHAKESPEARE. By Felix E. Schelling. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1910.

In a study of that wonderful period wherein the drama rose from the level of *Gorboduc* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* to that of *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, wherein the quality of verse started at Stanihurst and rose to Marlowe, Spenser, and Shakespeare, the critic has before him a field so richly productive in varying kinds of literature that it is no easy matter to present within reasonable compass a clear view of the whole. Only in our own day, if at all, have there been more producers of books: out of the mass, what shall we select as significant for its intrinsic worth, or for its influence upon the literature of the day? The danger is, that, struggling through the mass of recently developed fact and criticism upon Elizabethan writers, the critic who essays to present a complete view of the period will overload his book with facts, and in the effort to give something about everybody, crowd his canvas with so many figures that the real meaning of the composition is obscured, the attitude of the really heroic figures concealed by the crowding of mere camp followers and suttlers.

Professor Schelling, in his recent study of Elizabethan literature, has sought to escape this danger by making Shakespeare the central figure; but he has not altogether escaped it; he has not quite succeeded in showing, if indeed it be possible to show, "the dominating power of Shakespeare." He proposes, in his preface, to treat the literature of the period as a whole rather than by the study of the biographies of various great figures. And the titles of the first three chapters — "The Literature of Fact," "Literature of the Coterie," and "The New Cultivated Prose" — carry out this idea. But it soon becomes apparent that he is unable to maintain throughout such a classification of Elizabethan literature, that his plan even in these opening chapters is not logically carried out, and that his grouping of authors and works is rather empirical than strictly logical accord-

ing to the scheme proposed. For example, in the chapter on "The Literature of Fact" we find the *Mirror for Magistrates* along with Holinshed, Hakluyt, Harrison's description of England, and Foxe's *Martyrs*. The literature of fact, then, would seem to include chronicle-history, biography, and topography, in verse as well as in prose. But we must turn to chapter XVI to find such things as Raleigh's *History*, Stow's *Survey of London*, Camden, and Daniel's prose history, while the verse of Daniel, Warner, and Drayton, dealing with historic subjects, is found in chapter XII, and Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* is in a separate chapter devoted to that poet. Again, Spenser's *Amoretti* sonnets are not treated in the chapter just mentioned, but in a chapter devoted to the sonnet, while Sidney's sonnets are discussed in connection with the literary productions of his coterie, not in the chapter on the sonnet. Obviously, such a method of grouping is inconsistent, and we feel that the author would have done better to have followed some plan that would have been either one thing or the other, either the grouping of all like productions, or the grouping about the name of some commanding writer.

This defect of method in the work is a most unfortunate one, for it contributes largely to obscure the sterling worth of Professor Schelling's book. Few students in America can speak with more authority upon the subject than he, and one feels in reading the volume the presence of a wise and humane guide to whose literary taste and common sense one may gratefully yield. His criticisms, never radical, are yet never commonplace; though he seems over-diffident at times, he can speak out on occasion; and one feels that his reserve is the reserve of the cautious student who distrusts impressionistic enthusiasms. For this feature of the book one has but praise, even when one differs with him upon some of the critical suggestions that are, as it were, insinuated unobtrusively, as when (p. 94) he suggests that the wind-blown style of typical speeches in *The Spanish Tragedy* is "taken off not altogether unkindly by Shakespeare . . . in the soldier's account of the battle at the opening of *Macbeth*," or when (p. 232) he suggests that, "It seems not irrational to refer such a group of humorists as Falstaff and his rout . .

to Jonson's attempt to conceive theatrical personages on lines of definite simplicity and salient quality.' This last suggestion seems inadmissible both because of the probable relative dates of Jonson's comedies and the Falstaff plays, and because a far more satisfactory parentage for Falstaff and his rout — if, indeed, they be not "the brood of Fancy without father bred" — may be discovered. On the whole, we are more than content with Professor Schelling's critical judgments, we are happy to find them so perfectly frank, unterrified by tradition, unhampered by that most serious of all trammels upon criticism of recent years, pedantry. His study of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, for example, is very satisfying, steering a middle course in waters that pedantry has sown rather thick with mines. And one pardons what seems the one enthusiasm of the critic, in his excellent estimate of Donne.

But with this praise we are constrained to mingle complaint upon certain serious shortcomings of a book which, if it have any place, should serve as an authoritative record of fact upon the literature of the age. Not only is the proof-reading of the book poor, resulting in many typographical errors such as the reader may correct for himself, but there are mistakes in statement of fact, and a habit of loose statement or careless expression that makes one hesitate to commend the book as a safe guide. On page 133, the sixth line of Donne's famous sonnet on Death is marred by printing "than" for "then"—an error that may be corrected from the author's own excellent collection of Elizabethan lyrics. On page 144, the first line of Shakespeare's key sonnet is printed, "Two loves I had of comfort and despair;" while on page 216 the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* is incorrectly quoted. Sir John Davies is said to have written *Hymns to Astræa*, "each an acrostic on the words 'Elzabeta [*sic*] (p. 218) Regina.'" One of Jonson's characters is referred to on page 234 as "Fastidious Brisk, 'a spruce, affected courtier,'" while on page 237 he is an "affecting" courtier; and on page 244, another of Jonson's characters is referred to as "Zeal-in-the-Land Busy." The reader is called upon to fight his way through many sentences such as this (p. 61): "The Spenserian stanza is really less monotonous than blank-verse, even with

Milton, in all his varied powers, as its exponent, to say nothing of stanzas, ending in a couplet and shorter quatrains;" or this (p. 528): "Nor is the matter helped by the loss of any trace of Kyd's old *Hamlet* or the existence of a German version of the play derived from England, but whether before or after the Shakespearian quartos is doubtful." Consider the case of a reader having to rely upon this sort of confused statement for his only knowledge of an important series of facts. Nor is this by any means all; we might note examples as bad from many pages, as on pages 67, 91, 117, 299 — where the author contorts his phrase until it means the opposite of what he intends — and 331. These are sometimes merely puzzles to the reader and offences against clear expression; but there are also examples of confused, inaccurate, or even erroneous statement of fact. Thus Shakespeare (p. 149) "entered into a bond when scarcely nineteen to marry Ann Hathaway who was nine years his senior." On pages 422, 423, the reader would find some difficulty in determining the facts in regard to early editions of the *Arcadia* from these statements: "The year 1612 saw the fourth edition of North's *Plutarch*; the following year the *Arcadia* in a sixth . . . . *Astrophel and Stella*, after three editions in the single year 1591, was always reprinted with the *Arcadia*, thus issuing for the seventh time in 1613." Such facts should be given accurately in the bibliography, but that does not help us here, and the reader has to trust he is guessing right in guessing that the last clause refers to *Astrophel and Stella*. Hall, the arrogant satirist, becomes an *enfant terrible*; for we are told (p. 322) that he was "born in the year of the Armada" — which should be 1588 — and published his first satires in 1597.

It is proverbially easy for the onlooker to furnish "counsels of perfection;" but there should be no hesitation in saying that the book would be vastly improved by a more systematic arrangement of its really rich materials, and by a careful revision to remove the numerous obscure and careless statements, and that it must be so improved before it can be heartily commended.

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